

Daily Gazette  
Saratoga Springs  
August 2002

# Turtle eggs studied for PCB damage

Federal, state effort seeks to assess pollution impact on Hudson River

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Federal and state employees collected snapping turtle eggs this summer from both the upper and lower Hudson River to see if they are contaminated by PCBs.

The snapping turtle investigation is part of the PCB natural resource damage assessment of the Hudson River being conducted by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the state Department of Environmental Conservation and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The assessment project is not connected with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's decision earlier this year to make General Electric Co. pay nearly \$500 million to dredge 2.65 million cubic yards of PCBs (which the EPA says are a probable carcinogen) from the 40-mile stretch of the Hudson between Fort Edward and the Federal Dam in Troy.

The eggs collected — five per turtle nest — are currently being tested at independent laboratories, said Fred Caslick, an outreach specialist for the New York field office of the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Caslick said the results of the tests should be available by the

end of the year.

Federal officials would not be specific about where the eggs were taken. Caslick would only say some of the eggs were gathered in the upper Hudson River between Fort Edward and Troy and some eggs from the lower Hudson, somewhere below the city of Troy.

"They will give us baseline information on the pathway of contamination," Caslick said.

The turtle egg tests are expected to show where damage from PCBs may be occurring, "if it is occurring," he said.

The trustees of the resource damage assessment — NOAA, DEC and Fish and Wildlife — said that past and continuing discharges of polychlorinated biphenyls [PCBs] have contaminated Hudson River natural resources.

In mid-to-late September the damage assessment trustees will release its damage assessment plan, which is a road map or list of completed or planned scientific studies to determine injury to the river ecology, said Lisa Pelstring, a spokeswoman for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Once the extent of the damage has been determined, through studies like the turtle-egg analysis, GE could be liable to pay to correct any environmental damage caused by the



Photo provided by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
**Researchers in the field gather snapping-turtle eggs recently.**

PCBs. Such a final implementation plan and the filing of any claim against GE is some "years" away, according to Caslick.

The remediation phase probably won't be started until after the dredging project is completed. The latest timetable targets 2005 for the start of dredging and it is expected to last four to five years.

GE capacitor plants in Hud-

son Falls and Fort Edward discharged an estimated 1.3 million pounds of PCBs into the upper Hudson over a 30 year period, ending in 1977 when the practice was banned.

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